

PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK/SITE NAME: Scullin-Neblett House

OWNERS: Jose and Jonathan Clark

APPLICANT: SAME AS OWNERS

LOCATION: 2518 Riverside Drive, Houston, Texas,
77004 – Riverside Terrace

AGENDA ITEM: B.1

HPO FILE NO.: 18PL165

DATE ACCEPTED: Nov-13-2018

HAHC HEARING: Nov-13-2018

SITE INFORMATION: Lot 5, Block 32, Riverside Terrace Sec 5, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Protected Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Scullin House is a two-story brick veneer house that is a hybrid of architectural styles found in Houston's more affluent neighborhoods beginning in the 1920s. The house faces south on Riverside Drive and was constructed in late 1929 to early 1930 in the historic Riverside Terrace neighborhood. Two main families have resided in the home during most of its history: the Scullin family and the Neblett family. The current owners, Jose and Jonathan Clark, bought the home in 2014, and are seeking protected landmark designation for the property.

Paul Cornelius Scullin and his wife Nellie Dibvell Scullin were the first owners of 2518 Riverside Drive beginning in March 1930. Paul worked in the refining department at The Texas Company (later Texaco) for most of his career, retiring as an executive. The Scullin family resided at 2518 Riverside Drive for 33 years. After Paul and Nellie died, their daughter Jean sold the home to the Neblett family in April 1963.

Gilberta Delphine Bradford Neblett and her husband Robert Eugene Neblett were the second owners of the home. Eugene was a U.S. Army Staff Sergeant during World War II, and Gilberta was an influential educator and mentor. Additionally, she was a very prominent and active member in the Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church. After Robert's passing in 2002, Gilberta continued to live at 2518 Riverside until she died at the age of 93 in 2010.

The ownership history of the home reflects the changing demographics of the neighborhood. While initially occupied by affluent Jewish and white families, successful African-American families began to buy homes in Riverside Terrace in the 1950s. The shift in ownership from the Scullins to the Nebletts is representative of this changing demographic trend. When the Nebletts bought the home in 1963, the neighborhood had already begun shifting to predominantly African-American families.

According to architectural historian Stephen Fox, the house at 2518 Riverside is a very good example of the hybrid style of homes popular in Houston in the 1920s and 1930s. The asymmetrical home is a combination of three styles: Craftsman, Tudor, and Mediterranean Revival. The prolific Russell Brown Company was commissioned to build the home. They were well known for their work during this period in several historic neighborhoods, including Riverside Terrace, River Oaks, Broadacres, Avondale and Westmoreland.

The Scullin-Neblett House at 2518 Riverside Drive, Houston, Texas, 77004 meets criteria 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 for Protected Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

RIVERSIDE TERRACE

The first section of Riverside Terrace was platted in 1924. Development of the area was started by Henry Frederick MacGregor, who came to Houston in 1883 and began investing in real estate. By 1900, MacGregor had extended Houston's residential area southward by building several subdivisions in the South Main area. During the first two decades of the 20th century, "street-car suburbs" flourished in Houston and residential developments spurred the extension of streetcar lines.

By the mid-1920s, the growing popularity of the automobile led to new "automobile suburbs" in Houston. Several of these residential subdivisions were platted out on either side of Brays Bayou in the vicinity of Hermann Park. One such suburb was Riverside Terrace.

When Riverside Terrace opened, early sales brochures stressed the area's premier location. The subdivision was promoted as being near South Main's cultural, medical, educational and social facilities. The first section of the project – an area bounded by Almeda, Blodgett, Live Oak and Oakdale streets – was financed by the Guardian Trust Company. The developer, using the same sales language as the River Oaks Corporation, noted that there would be "rigid building restrictions...so that each purchaser is assured beforehand of the exact character of the improvements with which he will be surrounded."

The success of Riverside Terrace attracted other developers, and the subdivisions of Washington Terrace and Riverside were platted in the vicinity. Today, the entire area is known as Riverside Terrace.

Riverside Terrace was once home to a large number of Jewish families, including such prominent names as Weingarten, Finger, Sakowitz and Battlestein, who were excluded from River Oaks. From the 1930s until the post-war era, the neighborhood was unofficially known as the "Jewish River Oaks," for its affluent residents and impressive homes, particularly those on MacGregor Drive overlooking Brays Bayou.

Architects who designed homes in the neighborhood include John Staub, Birdsall Briscoe, Bolton & Barnstone and Joseph Finger. Several distinctive modern houses were designed by the office of Bailey A. Swenson. The architectural firm of MacKie and Kamrath also produced homes of modern design. One house, featured in *Architectural Record* in 1942, was described as having excited neighborhood controversy for being so modern. Today, the neighborhood contains numerous outstanding examples of residential architecture ranging from traditional revival styles to late Art Deco and mid-century modern, interspersed with small motels, apartment buildings and, most recently, townhouse developments.

The neighborhood's demographics began to change in 1952 when affluent African-American cattleman Jack Caesar moved his family into Riverside Terrace. Caesar remained in his house even after a bomb was detonated on the front porch. In the mid-1950s, white families began moving to more distant suburbs. In the early 1960s, white residents who saw the potential for an integrated neighborhood tried to stabilize the area by posting signs that read, "This Is Our Home, It Is Not For Sale," which became the

title of a 1985 documentary by Jon Schwartz that gives a 60-year overview of the community and its struggle to integrate.

Eventually, all but a few white homeowners left Riverside Terrace, but the neighborhood once again became home to prominent professionals – this time African-American college professors, doctors, lawyers and politicians. Home construction and commercial development have recently revived, especially on the southern edge of the neighborhood.

MR. PAUL CORNELIUS SCULLIN (b. May 29, 1873, d. January 27, 1961)

MRS. NELLIE DIBVELL SCULLIN (b. December 10, 1876, d. April 21, 1962)

Paul Cornelius Scullin and his wife Nellie Dibvell Scullin (née Kellie) became the first owners of 2518 Riverside Drive in March 1930. They lived in the house with their two daughters, Margaret and Jean. Paul was born in Beaverville, Sullivan County, New York to Irish parents John Scullin and Katherine Deveney, and Nellie was born in Jasper, Texas to Captain Edward Irwin Kellie of South Carolina and Martha S. Brown of Alabama.

Paul married Nellie in Jasper on June 10, 1903. According to the Houston city directories and census records, the Scullins moved to Houston around 1910, where they initially lived at 2108 San Jacinto. Paul was a secretary at The Texas Company (later Texaco) in the refining department. He stayed with the company the rest of his career, working his way up to an assistant manager position, and later becoming an executive. Paul and Nellie Scullin lived at 2518 Riverside Drive from the time they purchased the home for \$18,000 in 1930 until they died. Paul died in 1961 at the age of eighty-seven, and Nellie passed away one year later in 1962, aged eighty-five. Both were buried in Forest Park Cemetery in Houston.

MR. ROBERT EUGENE NEBLETT (b. October 8, 1919, d. March 17, 2002)

MRS. GILBERTA DELPHINE BRADFORD NEBLETT (b. May 27, 1917, d. October 4, 2010)

After Paul and Nellie died, their daughter Jean sold the home to the Neblett family in April 1963. Robert Eugene Neblett was born in Navasota to native Texans William and Elna Neblett. According to his World War II Draft Card, he was employed at the McClung Barber Shop in the early 1940s. Eugene was a U.S. Army Staff Sergeant during WWII. His wife, Gilberta Delphine Bradford Neblett (née Portley from her mother's second marriage) was born to Calvin Bradford and Lillie Green Bradford in Galveston. Gilberta and Robert married in Houston on September 2, 1942.

Gilberta's exceptional service as an educator and mentor was documented in her obituary by Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church. Gilberta was a secretary for twenty-five years at Atherton Elementary School in the Houston Independent School District (HISD). Additionally, she worked at two other HISD schools: E.O. Smith Junior High School and Booker T. Washington Senior High School. She personally mentored U.S. Congress members Barbara Jordan and George "Mickey" Leland, State Representative Harold Dutton, Harris County Commissioner El Franco Lee and champion boxer George Foreman. After retiring from HISD, Gilberta spent eight years in Judge Surrey Davis's office in the Harris County Judicial System.

Gilberta was a very prominent and active member in the Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church. According to her obituary, Gilberta “was one of the eldest members who had a long-standing service record in the church.” She held multiple positions, such as Christian Educator and Superintendent of Sunday School. Moreover, Gilberta was an important and influential member of United Methodist Women. In their community, Gilberta and her husband Robert were known to open their doors for anyone who needed shelter, food or other personal assistance.

Robert died at the age of eighty-two and was buried at Houston National Cemetery (Veterans Memorial Cemetery). After his passing, Gilberta continued to live at 2518 Riverside until she died at the age of ninety-three in 2010. They are survived by their three children – Robert Eugene Neblett II, Lillie Neblett Jefferson and Paulette Neblett McNeese.

CURRENT OWNERS

Gilberta Neblett died in 2010, and her estate held the property until it was purchased by Elbar Investments Inc. Jose and Jonathan Clark bought the property from Elbar Investments Inc. in 2014. The Clarks are the third and current owners of 2518 Riverside Drive and are seeking protected landmark designation for the house.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

THE RUSSELL BROWN COMPANY

According to architectural historian Stephen Fox, the Russell Brown Company was a Houston-based architectural design and construction company. The company was chartered in 1906 by Russell Brown. Brown was born on December 12, 1875 in Taylor, Texas and came to Houston in 1902. Brown retired from the building business around the time of World War II. He lived in retirement at a ranch near Juliff, where he died in 1963.

The Russell Brown Company specialized in residential design in Houston until the early 1940s. They constructed numerous houses in the Westmoreland, Montrose, Boulevard Oaks and River Oaks neighborhoods and the Dallas subdivision of Munger Place. The company was the general contractor of such notable Houston houses as the William S. Farish House (1925) in Shadyside and the Cleveland Sewall House (1926, National Historic Landmark) in River Oaks.

Brown expanded his operations by opening branch offices in Dallas by 1916, San Antonio by 1922 and Los Angeles, California in 1923. The major houses they designed and built include the Herbert L. Kokernot House (1928) in Monte Vista in San Antonio, the O.L. Seagraves House (1929) at the Mo-Ranch near Hunt, the Talbott F. Rothwell House (1929) in Beaumont, and the W.B. Morgan House (1931) in Olmos Park Estates in Olmos Park, Texas. Among the architects who worked at various times for the Russell Brown Company in Houston were A.N. Dawson, Charles W. Oliver, Mike Mebane and Gonzalo Ancira.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Stephen Fox has described the house at 2518 Riverside Drive as a 1920s Houston hybrid due to the several styles it incorporates. The following is his explanation of the different components of the exterior:

“The massing of the house, with a separately roofed entrance bay set to one side (rather than centered), balanced by a long-recessed wing anchored by the front-facing chimney stack, is associated with picturesque manorial type suburban houses (i.e. Tudor), as are the ganged windows (windows grouped together in twos and threes). However, the classical detailing of the entrance portal and the pair of arched French doors in the east-side loggia are associated with Mediterranean type Houston houses of the 1920s. The overhanging roof eaves with the rafter ends beneath them exposed are a hang-over from Craftsman type Houston houses of the 1910s and early '20s. The mixed blend of black and red brick was very popular in Houston in the 1920s.”

The two-story home has a hipped, asphalt shingle roof with Craftsman style rafter tails. The hipped roof has a half-gabled wing wall on the left side of the entry (right) bay. The Tudor components include open eaves and windows in groupings of two or more. The house has a pier and beam foundation.

The asymmetrical front façade contains three bays. The first floor of the first (left) bay contains two French doors with multi-pane fanlights; a pair of 1-over-1 sash windows with 16-light screens is on the second floor.

The second (central) bay contains four 1-over-1 sash windows with 12-light screens on the first floor, and three 1-over-1 sash windows with 12-light screens on the second floor. All the windows have continuous brick sills.

The third (right) bay contains a prominent, Tudor style, off-center, false double chimney with masonry detailing. The chimney pierces the roof. The third bay also contains a Georgian Revival entry that includes a rounded arch wooden door recessed under a rounded masonry arch entry porch. The arch is flanked by Tuscan pilasters under a masonry pediment, with classical dentil detailing. On the second floor of the third bay, there is a pair of 1-over-1 sash windows with 12-light screens and a continuous brick sill.

RESTORATION HISTORY

The Scullin House has remained largely unchanged since its construction. After Jose and Jonathan Clark purchased the home in 2014, they did minor renovations that maintained the historic aspects of the property and are continuing to respectfully restore it. While renovations have been primarily on the interior, the Clarks did repaint the exterior trim and replace the roof. They kept the original windows, doors and hardware intact. Two sets of original French doors on the left front façade needed to be replaced, but identical doors were crafted and installed.

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The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by the Historic Preservation Office Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION**Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation**

(a) The HAHC, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider one or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the type of designation:

S	NA		S - satisfies	D - does not satisfy	NA - not applicable
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(1) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area possesses character, interest or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation;			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(3) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation;			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(4) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city;			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(5) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood;			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation;			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.			
AND					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(9) If less than 50 years old, or proposed historic district containing a majority of buildings, structures, or objects that are less than 50 years old, whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is of extraordinary importance to the city, state or nation for reasons not based on age (Sec. 33-224(b)).			

EXHIBIT A
SCULLIN-NEBLETT HOUSE
2518 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77004 – RIVERSIDE TERRACE
1964 HISTORIC PHOTO



SCULLIN-NEBLETT HOUSE
2518 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77004 – RIVERSIDE TERRACE
FRONT ELEVATION



SCULLIN-NEBLETT HOUSE
2518 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77004 – RIVERSIDE TERRACE
LEFT (SIDE) ELEVATION



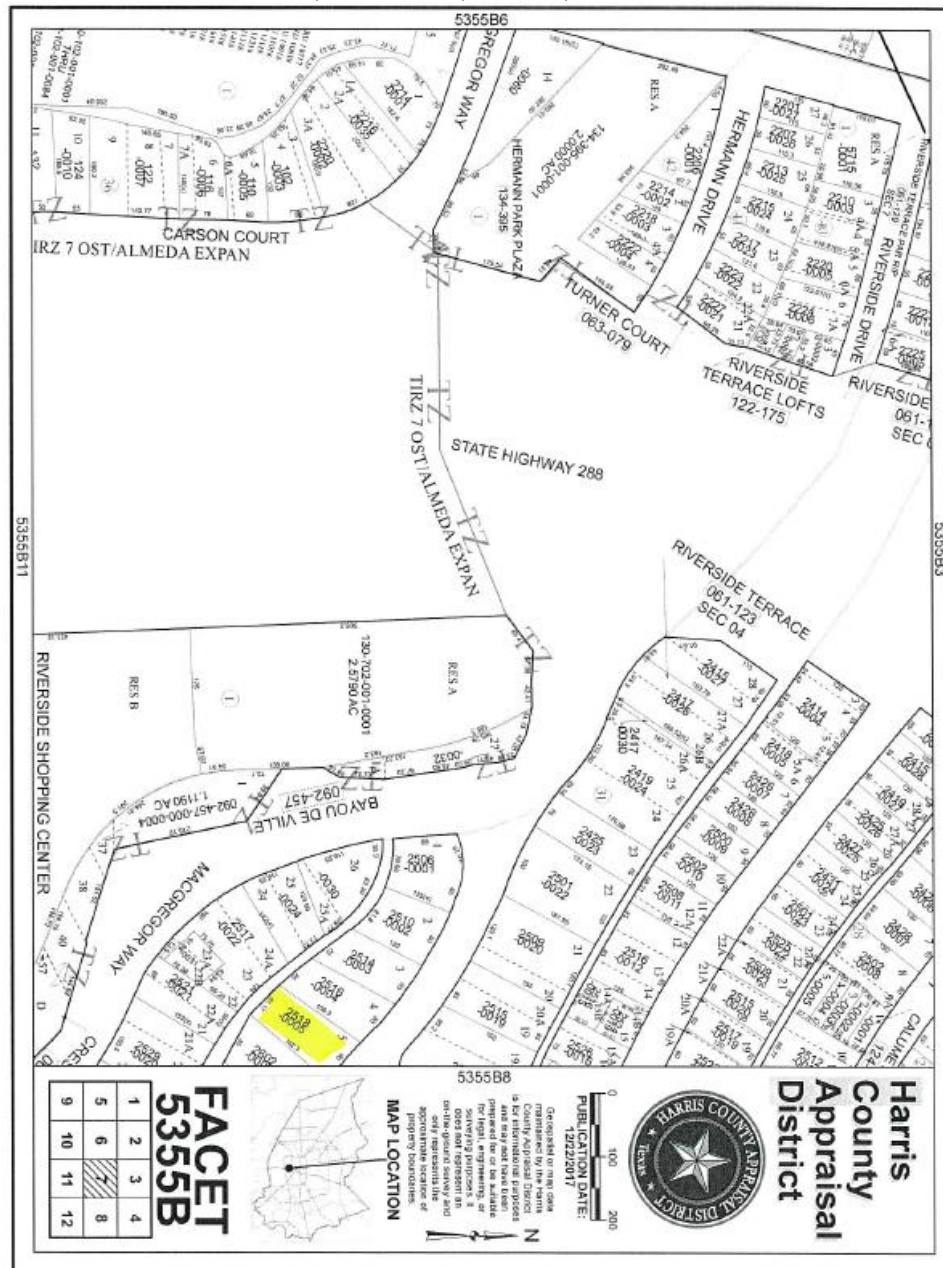
SCULLIN-NEBLETT HOUSE
2518 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77004 – RIVERSIDE TERRACE
RIGHT (SIDE) ELEVATION



EXHIBIT B SITE MAP

SCULLIN-NEBLETT HOUSE

2518 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77004 – RIVERSIDE TERRACE



CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

SANBORN MAP
SCULLIN-NEBLETT HOUSE
2518 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77004 – RIVERSIDE TERRACE

SANBORN MAP

